

VZCZCXYZ0002  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHDS #1497 1361322  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 161322Z MAY 07  
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6144

UNCLAS ADDIS ABABA 001497

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR: DS/IP/AF, DS, IP/ITA, AF/E

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ASEC PTER ET

SUBJECT: Hand grenade/explosive attacks in Ethiopia

REF: ADDIS ABABA 1308

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: The Embassy has received reports of four separate and unrelated incidents involving explosives (most likely hand grenades) used to carry out attacks in different regions of Ethiopia. An incident in the Amhara Region resulted in 8 dead and 26 wounded. The other three incidents occurred in Jijjiga, capital of Ethiopia's Somali (Ogaden) Region. One of these incidents involved hand grenades used during a personal dispute. The second incident involved smugglers (NFI) who threw hand grenades at the police. The third incident involved a hand grenade thrown at a Shell gas station. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) On May 12, unknown persons detonated an explosive device (reported by the police to be a hand grenade) at a local fundraising bazaar in the town of Felakit (Mekit Woreda, North Wello Zone), in the Amhara Region. Eight civilians were reported killed (including one Ethiopian police officer) and 26 were wounded. The perpetrators of this incident remain at large, and police investigation is ongoing. The motive for the attack remains unclear, but local officials express concern that the Patriotic Front may be responsible. The Patriotic Front has previously been active in the Amhara Region, but in North Gondar Zone, not in the North Wello Zone.

¶3. (U) Jijjiga is the capital of Ethiopia's Somali (Ogaden) Region. Initially, there were fears the three explosions there were related to each other and possibly terrorist attacks. These three incidents appear to be unrelated to each other. It is not uncommon in Ethiopia for hand grenades to be used to settle personal disputes, as is the case in one of the Jijjiga incidents. The second Jijjiga incident involved criminals who were attempting to evade the police, two of whom were later apprehended. The third Jijjiga incident targeted a Shell fuel station and is believed by many to be the work of the Ogaden National Liberation front (ONLF). The three Jijjiga incidents resulted in only minimal property damage and no reported serious injuries or deaths.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: Hand grenades and other military weapons are readily available on the black market in the Somali (Ogaden) Region. While hand grenades and weapons are available on the black market in Addis Ababa, they are considerably more expensive and less accessible. To date, the ONLF has not claimed responsibility for the attack on the Shell fuel station in Jijjiga, although it has warned against foreign exploitation of mineral resources in the Ogaden. The ONLF publicly acknowledged responsibility for an April 24 attack on a Chinese oil facility in the Somali Region that killed 9 Chinese and over 80 Ethiopians (reftel). END COMMENT.

YAMAMOTO